Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1-14 **(canceled)**

15. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:

an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet, wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in longitudinal cross section;

wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of turns;

wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured together by a bonding agent so as to form a tubular duct; and

wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

16. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein

said bonding agent comprises a noncombustible bonding agent.

17. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 16, wherein

said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

18. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein

said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

19. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 18, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is glass wool.

20. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 18, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is rock wool.

21. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein

said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

22. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:

an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet, wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in longitudinal cross section;

wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of turns;

wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured together by a noncombustible joint member so as to form a tubular duct; and

wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

23. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

24. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 23, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is glass wool.

25. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 23, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is rock wool.

26. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

27. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

said elongated strip has first and second opposite sides facing in opposing axial directions of said tubular duct, respectively, and inner and outer sides facing toward an interior of said tubular duct and an exterior of said tubular duct, respectively;

said elongated strip has flanges projecting from said first and second sides thereof, respectively; and

said noncombustible joint member is secured to said flanges of adjacent turns of said elongated strip to connect said flanges together, thereby connecting said turns together.

28. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 27, wherein

said flanges include axially-extending portions extending in axial directions of said tubular duct; and

said noncombustible joint member has opposing side edges that are folded-over said axially extending portions, respectively, of said flanges of the adjacent turns of said elongated strip.

29. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 28, wherein

said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

30. **(currently amended)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 28, wherein

said flanges project into the interior of said tubular duct, and said noncombustible joint member ~~are~~ is disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

31. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:

an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet, wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in longitudinal cross section;

wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of turns;

wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured together by both a bonding agent and a noncombustible joint member so as to form a tubular duct; and

wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

32. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

33. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 32, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is glass wool.

34. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 32, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is rock wool.

35. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

36. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

said elongated strip has first and second opposite sides facing in opposing axial directions of said tubular duct, respectively, and inner and outer sides facing toward an interior of said tubular duct and an exterior of said tubular duct, respectively;

said elongated strip has flanges projecting from said first and second sides thereof, respectively; and

said noncombustible joint member is secured to said flanges of adjacent turns of said elongated strip to connect said flanges together, thereby connecting said turns together.

37. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 36, wherein

said flanges include axially-extending portions extending in axial directions of said tubular duct; and

said noncombustible joint member has opposing side edges that are folded-over said axially extending portions, respectively, of said flanges of the adjacent turns of said elongated strip.

38. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 37, wherein

said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

39. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 37, wherein

said bonding agent comprises a noncombustible bonding agent.

40. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

said bonding agent comprises a noncombustible bonding agent.

41. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

said elongated strip has flanges projecting from first and second sides thereof into an interior of said tubular duct, said noncombustible joint member is engaged with said flanges, and said flanges and said noncombustible joint member are disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

42. **(previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

said elongated strip has flanges projecting from first and second sides thereof into an interior of said tubular duct, said noncombustible joint member is engaged with said flanges, and said flanges and said noncombustible joint member are disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

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43. **(new)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein said bonding agent is disposed longitudinally between adjacent turns of said tubular duct.

44. **(new)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein said noncombustible sheet is formed of a material selected from the group consisting of an aluminum glass cloth, aluminum foil, a nonflamably treated resin film, a glass cloth the pores of which have been filled and coated with silicon, a fire proof processed nonwoven cloth, a nonflamably treated mixed woven cloth, and a mica sheet.

45. **(new)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein said noncombustible sheet is formed of a material selected from the group consisting of an aluminum glass cloth, aluminum foil, a nonflamably treated resin film, a glass cloth the pores of which have been filled and coated with silicon, a fire proof processed nonwoven cloth, a nonflamably treated mixed woven cloth, and a mica sheet.

46. **(new)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein said bonding agent is disposed longitudinally between adjacent turns of said tubular duct.

47. **(new)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein

said noncombustible sheet is formed of a material selected from the group consisting of an aluminum glass cloth, aluminum foil, a nonflamably treated resin film, a glass cloth the pores of which have been filled and coated with silicon, a fire proof processed nonwoven cloth, a nonflamably treated mixed woven cloth, and a mica sheet.